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THE COMANCHE RESERVATION IN TEXAS

By Rupert N. Richardson

000 On the Clear Fork of the Brazos, about twenty miles north of Albany, Texas, may be seen the crumbling ruins of Old Camp Cooper, a Federal outpost of the late fifties. One of the buildings has been kept in repair and even yet serves as a residence; the very building which, of course, tradition has fixed as the headquarters of Robert E. Lee when he was in command of that post. The old post is often mentioned by writers of frontier history, but 657 the reason for its location at that point is apt to be forgotten. In May, 1855, the Comanche Indian reservation was established, the agency of which was located about two and one-half miles down the river from the point where the post was located about eight months later. The observer of our own times can find nothing of the remains of this agency but a few foundation stones, some cedar posts or pickets and a depression in the ground which seems to mark the site of an old cellar. However, the Indian home established here is a matter of more than local historical interest for it represented the first efforts of the United States Government to apply the reservation system to nomadic Indians of the plains. 121 The purpose of this paper is to give a review of this experiment and to take some notice of its significance in the frontier history of this region.

657 The reservation system had recently been tried with the Indians in California and was reported to be working successfully.[1] The plan was to confine the Indians within a comparatively small area and give them every advantage possible in the way of schooling and instruction by paid agents and employees of the Government. It was expected that at first the Indian Department would be obliged to sustain them almost wholly but that after a few years they could be made largely self supporting. In adopting this policy to solve the Comanche problem in Texas the United

[113] 1. Lena Clara Koch, "The Federal Indian Policy In Texas, 1845-1860," in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIX, 99.
Miss Koch's chapter, entitled "The Reservation System and Its Results," contains much information on both the Comanche and the Brazos reservations. The Brazos reservation was established for the sedentary Indians of Texas about fifty miles to the east.

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657 States Government failed to take into consideration many difficulties peculiar to the Texas Indian situation as well as the inherent characteristics of the plains tribes not found in the Indians of other regions.

Establishing the Reservation

The question of a permanent home for the Indians of Texas was often raised during the decade following annexation; but the problem was difficult to solve, especially since the state maintained that neither the Indians nor the United States had any property rights in the Texas public domain. Under the terms of annexation the state had shifted to the Federal Government the responsibility of managing the Indians but had retained her public lands. [423] Thus, the savages were regarded as tenants at will and in its effort to keep them pacified the United States Indian service had to contend with the steady encroachment of the settlers.

178 Naturally the misery and poverty of the savages increased
511 from year to year and the problem of restraining them grew pro-
657 portionately greater. The following words are given as those of Ka-tem-e-see, a Southern Comanche chief:

178 > Over this vast country, where for centuries our ances-
829 > ters roamed in undisputed possession, free and happy,
[224] > what have we left? The game, our main dependence, is killed and driven off, and we are forced into the most sterile and barren portions of it to starve. We see nothing but extermination left us, and we await the result with stolid indifference. Give us a country we can call our own, where we may bury our people in quiet.[2]

657 East of the Comanches, along the valleys of the upper Brazos
101 and Trinity rivers, were Caddo, Anadarko, Kichai, Haini, Tawa-
667 koni and other Indians whose condition was quite as desperate as that of the Comanches. Finally after one or more "location" bills had failed, the Legislature of Texas by an act of February 6, 1854, authorized the Federal Government to select not more than twelve leagues of land to be used for Indian reservations.[3] Captain Ran-

[113] 2. Horace Capron, United States Indian Agent in Texas, to Howard, September 30, 1858. Ms., in the University of Texas Library, photostat copies of papers in the United States Indian Office.
[113] 3. H. P. N. Gammel, Laws of Texas, III, 1495-1496.

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657 dolph B. Marcy of the United States Army, and Robert S. Neighbors, representing the Indian Department, were appointed to locate and survey the reservations and, after an extensive reconnaissance two tracts, one of four leagues on the Clear Fork of the Brazos and the other of eight leagues on the main Brazos were [131] located. The site of the Clear Fork or Comanche reservation is on the line of Shackelford and Throckmorton counties and that of the Brazos reservation, used by the sedentary tribes, is in Young county.

657 Thus did the Indian Department prepare to confine more
162 than a thousand nomadic savages on a reserve of a little more
000 than eighteen thousand acres. Today this land is the home of a few stock farmers and ranchmen and probably not as many as
657 fifty people live on it. Compared with the vast stretches the Comanches has considered as their home this was indeed a parsimonious grant; but the state contended that the Indian problem should be entirely a Federal burden, the cession was regarded as a gift, and Texas was not in a liberal humor. Yet, since the cardinal idea underlying the reservation system was not simply to feed and care for the Indians but to teach them to become self sustaining, it is strange that the Federal Government undertook the project at such an obvious disadvantage. It was to be expected that a nomadic people would take more interest in stock-raising than in farming; but herds could not be maintained on so small a tract and white men soon came and laid claim to the adjoining range. [134] Furthermore, only a small part of the reservation lands were arable. Naturally the wild Comanches were loathe to accept such a cramped environment.

However, some of the Indians were in such desperate straits that they awaited with eagerness the establishing of the reservation. Chief Ka-tem-e-see went far out into the prairies to meet Marcy and Neighbors on their return from the reconnaissance in order to assure them that his followers were ready and anxious to [578] occupy the home they were expecting. Also, it may be observed in passing, that the chief was not at all reticent in talking Comanche politics and describing the different factions that prevailed among [643] the Penatekas (Honey-eaters), or Southern Comanche bands. But soon Chief Sanaco appeared before the commission to inform them

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657 643 643 178 619 657 578 181 178 [657] that Ka-tem-e-see was an imposter and that he, Sanaco, was the real head of the Comanches.[4] Years of warfare with white men and savages and the struggle for existence incident to this confusion had demoralized the savages and weakened their tribal organization. There was not, in fact, any head chief and there had not been for several years. But these jealousies added substantially to the many difficulties the United States was destined to encounter in its efforts to point these people towards peace and civilization. Pride and independence were virtues these Indians no longer could boast of. Even Ka-tem-e-see begged of the commission corn and meat from their private stock of goods.

657 [162] When Agent Neighbors returned in November, 1854, to establish the reservation, he found on the Clear Fork large parties of Wacoes, Caddoes, Tawakonies and other smaller bands together with "the whole Southern band" of Comanches, the number of the latter being, according to his estimate, between one thousand and twelve hundred souls. Another council was held and the Indians urged that the Government hurry the preparations for the reservation since they were in a starving condition.[5] But notwithstanding the general eagerness on the part of the Indians about two-thirds of them were not located on the reservation at the time and perhaps half of them never accepted life there because of an unfortunate circumstance which must be charged largely to a blunder of the United States military forces. While some of chief Sanaco's people were at Fort Chadburne, about sixty miles to the southwest, on a friendly trading expedition, they were told by a certain Leyendecker, an Indian trader, that the white people were making plans to attack them and kill them all. "If you want anything more," said Leyendecker to the Indians, "trade quickly, mount your horses, go to Sanaco's camp, and tell him the white people are collecting together to kill him and his people, I see it on this paper; tell him if he wishes to live to go north as quickly as possible—do not eat, sleep or rest, until you give him this talk from his friend."[6]

657 648 439 648 648

[113] 4. R. B. Marcy, Thirty Years of Army Life On the Border, (New York, 1866) p. 204. See also W. B. Parker, Notes Taken Through Unexplored Texas, 1854 (Philadelphia, 1856) p. 186.

[113] 5. Neighbors to Manypenny, Commissioner of Indians Affairs, January 5, 1855. Ms. University of Texas, photostat copy.

[113] 6. Hill to Neighbors, August 31, 1855, gives an account of these happenings of January preceding. Thirty-fourth Congress, First Session, Sen. Doc. No. 1, Part 1, 842.

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657 pede. If Neighbor's estimate of a thousand or twelve hundred
657 souls be accepted as the approximate population of the Southern
162 Comanches, it is evident that not more than a fourth of these In-
[554] dians were at the reservation when it was established. The two most influential chiefs, Buffalo Hump, a chronic disturber, and Sanaco, destined to become quite as great a rogue, were still at large. Other Indians came in at different times, so that on one occasion there were 557 souls; but 350 or 400 would represent a fair average for the whole period.[9] Evidently many Indians came and left very much at will, in spite of the efforts of the agents to hold them.

657 It would have been much better if the renegades had stayed
[643] away altogether, for their chiefs were jealous of Ka-tem-e-see and
[578] frequently connived to supersede him. During the winter of 1855-1856, Sanaco came in, gave up some horses his people had stolen in the country west of San Antonio, and returned to the prairies
657 to bring in his band. He brought in his people according to
273 promise, but soon left because as he alleged, troops were arriving at Camp Cooper and he felt that this would mean that his braves could get whiskey. However, he must have known that his men could get whiskey while running at large even more easily than
657 at the reservation. A more plausible reason for his leaving is that
[643] given by the agent, John R. Baylor, namely, that he found he could
648 not supersede his rival, Ka-tem-e-see. His band became even more
[273] lawless and was charged with a number of robberies and murders. Once, in jocular mood, the chief sent word by an Indian runner that he would bring his people in if Major Neighbors would furnish him and his people with all the whiskey they could drink. And they would stay, he said, as long as the whiskey lasted!

657 Buffalo Hump was even more troublesome than Sanaco. He
648 would come in and make many promises stating that he had reformed and was determined to live the life of a good, honest Indian henceforth. But, if the spirit was willing the flesh was weak in the case of Buffalo Hump; and as soon as the agent had made him presents in consideration for his profession of good intentions he would steal away to the prairies to plunder and rob and live

9. The different reports of the agents show numbers as follows: January 1, 1854, 480; September 8, 1854, 557; September, 1857, 434; January 17, 1858, 881; September 16, 1858, 971; October 30, 1858, 841; July, 1859, 882.

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657 in his old savage way. Then, when his blankets were worn out
648 and game became scarce and stealing unprofitable he would re-
turn to repeat the process.[10] On one occasion this chief almost
648 started a war between the Comanches and the Indians on the
Brazos reservation. With Ka-tem-e-see and about seventy-five war-
riors he went to that reservation and approached the Anadarko village
in a threatening manner. The women and children of this and
neighboring villages fled and panic seized the entire Indian com-
munity. Fortunately the veteran Anadarko chief, Jose Maria, was
looking for trouble, had his men armed and prepared for action
and informed the intruders that he was ready either for "fight" or
"talk." The Comanches chose to talk and through the efforts of
the Brazos agent, S. P. Ross, and his interpreter, Jim Shaw, vio-
lence was avoided. When called upon to explain their extra-
ordinary conduct, the Comanches, evidently much embarrassed at
the turn the affair had taken, said that all was well, they were
satisfied, but they wished to ask just one question: "Were the
Caddoes going to continue to act as guides for the troops?"

This question explains the whole affair. No doubt Buffalo
Hump, using the milder Ka-tem-e-see as a tool, had hoped to
frighten the smaller bands into discontinuing the valuable aid
they had been rendering the troops as scouts and guides. It may
be that Buffalo Hump himself had suffered because of the skill
and faithfulness of these scouts. It is certain that in the years
that followed the wiley old renegade was much annoyed by these
scouts for as a leader of the wild Comanche bands he was often
657 trailed and surprised by these very Indians. Although these Co-
648 manches were wards of the Government and living off of its bounty
186 their sympathy for their wild marauding kinsmen was stronger
than that for any agent or soldier and they resented the fact that
these more civilized Indians were taking such an active part in the
interest of law and order.

657 In addition to these run-away Southern Comanches other
648 wild Indians made the work of the agents difficult and caused the
628 life of the reservation Indians to be haunted by many fears. The
101 were several distinct Comanche bands that had never had any inti-

[113] 10. See Anna Heloise Abel, The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist, page 210, for a letter from M. Leeper, once Comanche agent in Texas, to Elisa Rector, December 12, 1861. In this letter Leeper gives a short biography of Buffalo Hump and pronounces an anathema to his memory.

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mate relations with the Penatekas or Southern bands. Along Red River and the Canadian were the Tanimas, Nokonies and Kotsotekas, to the north were the Yamarikas and in the plains region were the fierce Kwaharies. Associated with these northern bands were the Kiowas, fierce and powerful. Parties from these different bands frequently visited the reservation, coming as friends or lurking near as enemies as best suited their purposes. Naturally the going and coming of these wild kinsmen and their occasional presence at or near the reservation made it very difficult for the agents to control their wards. Furthermore, in their raids against the Texas settlements and the North Mexican states these parties often passed near the reservation. This, according to Agent Leeper, was done both to steal additional horses from the reserve Indians and to direct the attention of the pursuers to those Indians in order that they might be charged to the innocent while the guilty made their escape. Indeed the Indians of the reservation frquently suffered severe losses of horses at the hands of these marauders.[11] During the last years of the reservation there developed an estrangement between its inhabitants and their wild kinsmen and at times the wards felt that their lives were insecure, although the agency was near by and the military post but two miles away. In May, 1858, Ka-tem-e-see took his boys out of school in order to keep them near him and better protect them from the wrath of the marauders of the north. By this time the chief had lost his enthusiasm for the wild Indians and on one occasion said that he did not care if the troops killed them all.[12]

On at least one occasion a lawless visitor came near causing a general revolt. One Santa Anna, a notoriously bad Indian, came and put up in Ka-tem-e-see's cabin. Since this was the only cabin on the reservation perhaps the insolent fellow felt that lodging accommodations were poor enough and he proposed to take the best. It was even rumored that he planned to supersede Ka-tem-e-see and make himself chief of the reservation. The chief ordered this Indian and his companion, a Nokoni Comanche, to leave; but they informed him that they were resting from their arduous journey and did not propose to leave until it suited their conven-

11. Leeper's Report, December 31, 1857. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

12. J. Shirley, employee at Barnard's trading house at the reservation, to C. E. Barnard, May 6, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy. Also, Leeper to Neighbors, February 8, 1858. Ibid.

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[657] [609] ience. When this was reported to Agent Leeper he called on the detail of troops stationed at Camp Cooper (only twenty men) to come at once. The lieutenant, Van Camp, came at once and surrounded the building. But to his chagrin and alarm, fifty or sixty warriors, armed with bows and guns, together with about thirty women and boys, armed with sticks and clubs, closed in around the cabin and took the side of the visitors so positively that Van Camp saw that a fight was ahead if he forced the issue. He ordered his men to prepare for action and a battle would have followed but for the fact that he discovered that his men had but one round of ammunition. They had used up nearly all their ammunition the day before in target practice. Thus, since it was impossible to apply force, all that was left for the lieutenant to do was to use persuasion. An agreement was patched up whereby the intruders were permitted to leave and this they did at once.

On the following day the Indians who had taken an active part in protecting the visitors came to Leeper and explained that they had offered resistance to the troops because they thought when they saw the soldiers approaching that all Indians on the reservation were going to be attacked and slain and they were determined to die fighting. Obviously they thought no such thing. Their bad faith in the whole matter was made more in evidence by their telling Leeper that they expected him to say that their "talk" was "good." In case he should not assent and say that their "talk" was "good" they would kill him and his family and leave the reservation.[13]

[609] Naturally the army officers and the Indian agents as well were sorely vexed with the Indians because of this affair. About all that can be said in defense of the savages is that they regarded the intruders as visitors and felt that to abandon them to the soldiers while they were guests at the reservation would be treachery. Some of the older men and women tearfully begged Ka-tem-e-see not to force the issue, just let the man escape and he would not bother them any more.

Inadequate Protection

The lack of proper protection by the troops was largely the

[113] 13. Leeper to Neighbors, August 31, 1855. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

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cause of the fear and uncertainty that clouded the lives of the reservation wards. During most of the year 1855 there were no troops closer than Fort Belknap, about fifty miles away, and none but infantry there. However, early in January, 1856, Camp Cooper was established on the reservation and for a time the Indians enjoyed a sense of security.[14] But after a few months, ill feeling developed between the army officers and the Indian agents, each side charging that the other would not cooperate. Both the army and the Indian records are well supplied with documents containing charges, denials and counter charges, but it would not be expedient or profitable to follow the quarrel in detail. No doubt the agents were prone to do much complaining and fault finding while the army men responded with a patronizing attitude and cynical remarks about the "beef eating" policy of the Indian department. Once Captain Stoneman at Camp Cooper took it upon himself to count the Indians or to attempt to count them and, according to the agent, almost caused a panic by proceeding without the assent and knowledge of the agents. The Indians were ever shy in the presence of soldiers and army officers. Naturally Leeper and Nighbors regarded Stoneman's conduct as an insult for it implied that their reports were not correct and that supplies were being fraudently drawn. Most of the army officers naturally sided with their fellow officer and the breach widened.[15]

In the spring of 1858, the army forces decided to remove Camp Cooper from its old location near the agency and Indian camps to a point some six or eight miles away from the agency. Leeper intimated that this was for the purpose of locating the post near a ranch owned by Captain Givens of the Second Dragoons.[16] However, it seems more plausible to conclude that the change was made as an act of spite and in retaliation against the charges made by the agents that the soldiers were not properly disciplined and were spending too much time among the Indians. When the agent protested at this move, complaining that he and his wards were left in a defenseless condition, the department commander of the

14. Bayler's report, September 12, 1854, Thirty-fourth Congress, Third Session, House Exec. Doc. No. 1, 725. See also, George F. Price, Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry, (New York, 1883), p. 4.

15. George Stoneman, Captain Second Cavalry, Camp Cooper, to Neighbors, September 6, 1857. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy. Also, Leeper to Neighbors, December 8, 1857, Ibid.

16. Leeper to Neighbors, March 29, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

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army advised him that if he felt insecure he could move the agency to a point nearer the new site. Thus for a while no troops were stationed nearer than eight miles from the agency. Now, when the troops moved out of Old Camp Cooper the Indians moved in and stored their grain and hay there. But soon a detachment of troops was ordered back to the old post and the Indians had to move out.[17] It seems that thereafter some troops were stationed continuously at the old post, but later the agent complained that the force consisted of but fifteen or twenty men—not enough to be of much aid in an emergency. During the crisis in June, 1859, when the frontier citizens were threatening to attack the reservation, an adequate cavalry force was stationed there and maintained until the Indians were removed.[18] However, it must be said that during much of the four years of the reservation's history the United States Army did not give the protection which even its limited means might have permitted.

Problems of the Agents

The vexations incident to controlling, teaching and starting on the road towards a civilized existence several hundred nomadic savages just taken from the prairies and confined to a reservation of a few square miles were too numerous to be adequately described. Sometimes the conduct and practices of the savages were enough to have exhausted the patience of a saint and that they were dealt with so successfully is a credit to the white men in charge.

Savage lawlessness and lack of self restraint naturally provoked clashes between individuals of a tribe where freedom of action had so recently been limited by this new environment. In a fit of anger one of the head men stabbed his wife and her brothers vowed to avenge her wrong. The husband's friends came to his side and a general fight seemed dangerously near. But, much to the surprise and relief of the agent, the guilty Indian came to him in a penitent mood and offered to receive any punishment that might be imposed. The agent left the matter to the other chiefs and quite naturally nothing was done. The woman recovered and her brothers apparently became reconciled.[19]

17. T. T. Hawkins, special agent to investigate conditions on the reservation, to Charles E. Mix, October 30, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.
18. Neighbors to Greenwood, June 10, 1859. Thirty-sixth Congress, First Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 2, p. 636.
19. Baylor to Neighbors, June 8, 1856. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

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164 The health of the Indians was not always good. Veneral
657 diseases were virulent and common and there was not sufficient medicines and doctors. Typhoid pneumonia is mentioned among the diseases reported by the doctor who occasionally attended the patients.[20]

241 The reservation farmer had his troubles also. The Indians would turn their horses into the corn field, or turn them loose where it was evident that they would get in the field. They would pull melons no larger than an egg and were want to consume all
241 their corn before it had grown to good roasting-ears. In the spring
657 of the second year they refused for some time to plant their crops until they had been given presents, but finally the agent persuaded them to go to work without the presents.

578 Sometimes there was violence unto death. A chief engaged
684 in intrigue with another man's wife and, according to custom, the injured man demanded that the chief compensate him to the amount of a horse. When the chief refused or hesitated to do this he was
696 slain at once by the sons of the injured man. Then the father and his sons together with their women and children fled from the reservation and were not overtaken, although a scouting party followed them for a hundred and fifty miles.[21]

177 And yet, notwithstanding these evidences of savage crudeness, it must be said that at least some of the Indians were making
177 progress toward a more civilized existence. Under the direction
241 of the reservation farmer they worked and occasionally made fairly
657 good crops, but the amount of land in cultivation was small. In 1857, they made but fifty bushels of wheat off of the twenty acres sown and 500 bushels of corn was produced on the remainder of
[567] their land in cultivation. For awhile the Indians were prone to rely too much on their prisoners to do the work but after these were freed and returned to their people in Mexico that abuse was corrected. In 1858, the reserve farmer reported a better yield. In the spring of that year he had divided the community fields into six divisions in order that each of the prominent clans might have
[231] a parcel of ground suited to its numbers. He thought that they would have made enough grain (principally corn) that year to

[113] 20. J. Shirley, bill for medical services, March 29, 1858. Ms. University of
[113] Texas photostat copy. Neighbors to Manypenny, March 7, 1856. Ibid.
21. Leeper to Neighbors, April 9, 1858, Ibid.

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177 241 657 [231] do them but for the fact that the fear of the white frontiersmen and wild Indians forced them to keep up their horses and feed them much of the time.[22] This partial elimination of the communist system had a wholesome effect, but it would have been impossible to carry it much farther because of the scarcity of arable land. A division of land so that each family head would have had a parcel separate and apart from the others would have become utterly impossible after a generation or two. Thus the cramped conditions on the small reservation would have acted as a barrier to progress even if the Indians had been permitted to remain there.

177 Many of the citizens of Texas complained that the reservation Indians were treacherous and dangerous and yet some of those persons living near the reserve vouched for the honesty of the Indians and stated that they regarded them as friends rather than enemies.[23] The settlement and development of the country in the vicinity of the reservation indicates that the white people generally had confidence in the peaceful disposition of the savages. It is significance that the most serious complaints did not come from those persons living near the reservation but from settlements a hundred or more miles away.

657 871 157 Some of the children made good progress in school. In 1858, it was reported that ten boys were in school and in a later account they were reported to be learning remarkably fast. Thomas T. Hawkins, special agent, who was sent to investigate the reservation in 1858, wrote of the Comanches:

> I regard them as superior in natural sense and intelligence to any of our full blooded native tribes—and I have seen many specimens in Washington, in the west and upon my journey hither.[24]

626 623 [648] [113] At times the Indians manifested some disposition to exercise tribal government sufficient to restrain unruly members. Once when a certain Indian, named Jack Porter, and two or three fol-

22. Neighbor's report. September 16, 1857. Thirty-fifth Congress, First Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 11, Vol. II. Also, Neighbors to Manypenny, May 14, 1856, and H. P. Jones, reservation farmer to M. Leeper, October 20, 1858, University of Texas photostat copies.

[113] 23. Thomas Lambshead (a citizen) to Manypenny, May 1, 1856. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy. Also, Hawkins to Mix, October 30, 1858, ibid.

[113] 24. Hawkins to Mix, October 30, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

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626 lowers returned from a raid to Mexico with twelve stolen horses,
623 a council of chiefs was called to consider the matter and the culprits were informed that if they repeated the act they would all be shot.[25] However, it must be said that the exercise of authority generally stopped with admonition and an influential warrior had little to fear from a council composed of his fellow warriors.
622 Chief Ka-tem-e-see was given the use of a cabin and was paid thirty
[657] dollars per month to act as head chief. From all accounts he took
[434] his position quite seriously and worked faithfully to lead his people
[166] aright. In one report it is stated that several females had recently deserted the reservation because of punishment he had inflicted upon them. Apparently the braves were dealt with more tactfully.

Breaking Up the Reservation

657 Naturally the people of Texas had expected that the establishment of the reservations whereby the Indians were given the opportunity to maintain a comfortable existence under government supervision would improve frontier Indian conditions. But this
648 hope proved to be in vain. The various bands of Southern Comanches who refused to settle, together with parties of their northern kinsmen and the Lipans and small parties of other tribes continued to harass the settlements to such an extent as to call forth protests from many sources. Conditions not only did not improve but, according to the accounts of that day, grew worse from year to year, especially after 1856.

From the very beginning, and for good reasons, some of the frontier citizens had come to regard the reservations as a source
648 of trouble. It is true that the agents did their best to control their
657 Indians and they certainly never tolerated theft when they could prevent it. However, with Indians coming and going in such promiscous fashion it was utterly impossible for the agents to know just what their wards were doing. Although some of the frontiersmen made allegations to the contrary, there is overwhelming evidence to the effect that ranchmen who came to hunt their lost or stolen stock were extended every aid and courtesy by the agents and Ka-tem-e-see. They rarely ever found their property there,

[113] 25. Neighbor's report, September 16, 1858, Thirty-fifth Congress, Second Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 1, Vol. I, p. 324.

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but when they did it was readily given up.[26] But no agent, however tactful, could long avoid a clash with the frontiersmen on this point. They naturally gave little consideration to the rights of the Indians, expected the word of any white man to be accepted over the denial of any number of Indians, and misunderstandings and disputes over property soon arose. The agents all the while stoutly maintained that their Indians were innocent and, although we may have some doubts to their contentions, they were certainly sincere. Likewise the frontiersmen were just as sincere in laying much of their trouble to the wards of the agents and as affairs progressed each side became more determined and emphatic. When the citizens failed to find their stock at the reservation they concluded that the marauders had left the reservation, had stolen the horses from the settlements, and then had made their way to join their wild friends to the north; and the large number of desertions from the reservation evidenced by the census returns furnish considerable foundation for this point of view.

During the latter part of 1857, petitions signed by Texas citizens were sent to the Secretary of the Interior asking that Neighbors be removed from office. These persons alleged that the reserve Indians had been stealing horses all along although Neighbors kept denying it. They charged that at different times they had found their stolen horses on the reservation, that the superintendent had refused to give them up and that there was no means left for them whereby they could secure their property. Other complaints were made, one being that signed by twenty-seven men addressed to Agent Leeper informing him that they would not henceforth honor his passports to Indians but that they proposed to attack any and all Indians found off of the reservation except where they were accompanied by responsible white persons. Their reasons for this threat appears to have been the report they had received that certain Indians whom they had pursued had since made threats against them. Furthermore, they would have Leeper inform the Indians that if there should be "a man killed on this river and there is the least proof that it was done by the Indians from the reserve

26. On this mooted point see J. B. (Buck) Barry to Hawkins, November 8, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy. Barry, who in his Reminiscences (Manuscript, University of Texas Archives) bitterly assails the reservation Indians, said in this letter of 1858, that Major Neighbors treated him in a "clever and gentlemanly manner" in the matter of his efforts to recover stolen horses.

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657 ... We will attack the reserve with a sufficient force to *break it up*
648 regardless of consequences.[27]

657 In January, 1858, a select committee of the state senate criticized severely the United States Indian policy in the state, referring to the fact that only a fraction of the Comanche Indians were located on the reservation and that friendly Indians were in the habit of passing and repassing into the settlements. Thus, they contended, wild Indians were mistaken for friendly ones and the white people were thus placed at the mercy of marauding bands. In addition to their recommendations for better military protection the committee stated that the agents should not permit the Indians to leave the reservations.[28]

[648] If these charges should be accepted at their face value they would represent within themselves rather convincing proof against the reservation Indians, but the records show that the whole issue was so completely shot through with bias and personal animosity that one is unable to know what to accept or reject. Reference has already been made to the ill feeling that pervailed between Robert S. Neighbors, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Texas, and some of the army officers. Furthermore, John R. Baylor, who seems to have been dismissed from the Indian service through Neighbor's influence, led in much of the agitation.

657 But regardless of the merits or injustice of the charges brought
648 against the reservation Indians feeling against them became so widespread and bitter that in February, 1858, Neighbors asked that special instructions be given the military to protect the reserve Indians from attacks by citizens. In May he made a trip to Washington to place the matter before the officials there, alleging that the soldiers could not be depended upon to protect the Indians because of the indifference of their officers.[29] In October, the sheriff of Young county, armed with a writ issued by the county court, set forth from Belknap with a posse of about forty citizens to arrest

[113] 27. W. G. Preston and others to M. Leeper, February 1, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy. John R. Baylor, Comanche agent until he was dismissed in May, 1857, is among the signers of this letter to Leeper.

[113] 28. "Report of Select Committee on Indian Affairs," State Gazette, Austin, March 27, 1858. George B. Erath, Henry E. McCulloch, Forbes Brittin, J. W. Throckmorton, and E. B. Scarborough composed the committee.

[113] 29. Neighbors to Mix, written at Washington, D. C., May 18, 1858. Neighbors complained that Major Paul, at Fort Belknap, Captain Stoneman at Camp Cooper, and Captain Givens, who owned a ranch about six miles from the reservation, had opposed him all along and had tried to incite the citizens against the Indians.

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657 a reservation Indian charged with committing an attack on a young
648 man named Johnson some months before. On hearing of the approach of the party Neighbors called on Captain Palmer at Camp Cooper for an escort, advanced with the escort and met the sheriff's party some distance from the reservation and finally persuaded the party to give up their purpose. Whether the sheriff desisted because of the law in the case or by fear of the United States soldiers was a matter of doubt in the minds of observers.[30]

657 The complaints against the agents and the reservation Indians led to the sending of a special agent to investigate the administration of affairs. This agent, Thomas T. Hawkins, stayed at Camp Cooper for five weeks and every opportunity was given the complaintants to make their appearance and testify as to their charges; but few of them did so and nothing of consequence was submitted. Hawkins' report commended the agents and the administration of both reservations very highly. The critics alleged that the investigation was *ex parte* and that it was intended from the beginning to "whitewash" the record of the Indian administration in Texas; but we should have more sympathy with them if they had gone through with their part of the program and submitted whatever evidence they had.

Perhaps the strongest testimony in favor of the Comanches is
657 that of John S. Ford and E. N. Burleson of the Ranger forces. They
648 came with their command to the vicinity of the reservation in the spring of 1858 when they and their officers were practically unanimous in the belief that the reservation Indians were committing depredations. These men were seasoned frontiersmen, had the frontiersmen's natural hatred and distrust of all Indians and were determined to secure evidence against the savages that could not be refuted. However, although they stayed for some time and sent out many scouts they found nothing whatever to confirm their suspicions. Ford states in his affidavit that when they found that
657 they could not secure any evidence against the Indians Captain Allison Nelson, one of the foremost critics of Neighbors, suggested to him that it would be very easy to make a trail leading into the reservation, but Ford would not hear to this. Nelson reported that the people in the vicinity of the reservation did not want it broken up and it was decided to abandon the idea. Ford quoted Nelson as

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30. See the letter of a correspondent to the New York Herald, November 16, 1858.

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stating that Neighbors had always escaped from the attacks of his enemies, but that men were after him "now" who were going to get his job.[31]

Naturally so much excitement and ill will inspired cruelty. In May, 1858, an inoffensive old Comanche was slain by a party of white men who wanted to get his horses and took advantage of the fact that he was away from the reservation without an escort or pass.[32] Late in December, a little party of friendly Indians from the Brazos reservation, known as Choctaw Tom's party, were attacked in their camp at night near Palo Pinto, whither they had gone by the consent of their agent and where they were regarded by the people of the immediate community as friendly and dependable. In fact, Choctaw Tom, the leader of the party, had returned to the reservation, but some of his people had remained near Palo Pinto in order to accept an invitation of some citizens of the community to stay a little longer and hunt bear with them.[33] The party that attacked the Indians was composed of citizens of Erath and neighboring counties further down the Brazos valley. They alleged that these Indians had been committing depredations but there is very little foundation for this contention.

The killing of these Indians created general excitement along the frontier because of the fear that their tribesmen would retaliate. The men who made the unwarranted attack on Choctaw Tom's party were never arrested although the governor by special proclamation called for their arrest. The grand jury of Palo Pinto county refused to indict the men but instead, indicted Jose Maria, the Anadarko chief, for horse stealing and in their report stated that the reservations were nuisances and that the people ought to take up arms against the Indians.[34] "Gatherings" of frontiersmen began to take place and many white men who had up to this time maintained a neutral or indifferent attitude began to join in the clamor against the savages. No doubt many of these men felt that the party from

31. Affidavit of John S. Ford and E. N. Burleson, November 22, 1858. University of Texas photostat copy.

32. Shirley to Barnard, May 6, 1858; Evans to Leeper, May 2, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copies.

33. J. J. Sturm, farmer at the Brazos agency, to Ross, December 28, 1858. Thirty-sixth Congress, First Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 2, Vol. I, p. 588. See also, the statement of Daniel Thornton, Peter Garland and others who attacked the Indians, made at Palo Pinto, January 4, 1859, Ibid, p. 606.

34. A copy of the report of the Grand Jury may be found in the Runnels Papers, Texas State Archives.

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Erath county had made a mistake in attacking the peaceful Indians, but they believed that the kinsmen of these Indians as well as the Comanches would retaliate and that there could be no peace on the frontier until both reservations were broken up. The agitators took advantage of this state of mind and never lost an opportunity to appeal to the fears and prejudices of the frontier people. It must not be understood that these men were "the very worst frontier characters" as the Indians agents sometimes charged. Among their leaders were John R. Baylor, former Indian agent; Peter Garland, of Erath county; R. W. Pollard, of Palo Pinto county; J. B. (Buck) Barry, of Bosque county, all prominent citizens in their communities and highly regarded by most of their neighbors. The years of bitter struggle with the Indians had hardened the hearts of the frontier people. As one of the more conservative of them has written in his memoirs, the frontier people were "always crazed at the sight of Indians and determined to kill,"[35] and when the safety of their families was involved they were wont to act first and investigate afterwards.

However, notwithstanding these "gatherings" of frontiersmen with all their fear and frenzy no drastic action was taken during the winter of 1858-1859, which is to be accounted for in part, at least, by the firm attitude maintained by the army officers who were guarding the reservations. The immediate objective of these threatening movements had been the "lower" or Brazos reservation. This was not because the white men regarded these Indians as the more culpable but rather because they felt that both the Brazos and Comanche reservations must be broken up and the Brazos Indians being the more numerous and powerful were regarded as the chief obstacle to be overcome.

Long before this crisis came the agents had felt that the Indians should be moved from Texas and as early as the summer of 1857 Neighbors had recommended that they be taken to the Indian Territory.[36] But the authorities in Washington did not give any consideration to the proposal and it was dropped for the time. Then came the demonstrations against the Indians during the winter and spring of 1859, and Neighbors again insisted that if the Indians

35. "Memoirs of George B. Erath," in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVII, 18.

36. Neighbors to Mix, August 5, 1857. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

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657 were not removed they would be driven away by the mad settlers. The government at Washington was slow to appreciate the gravity of the situation and the agents became frantic in their effort to secure authority to do what they knew was essential to save their wards from destruction. Finally, on March 30, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs wrote that the Indians would be moved in the fall or winter following. But this announcement did not satisfy the white people and Neighbors continued his efforts to secure authority to remove his wards at once.[37] Neighbors said that he and his associates had "stood their ground" so far, but that they wanted their superiors to share with them the responsibility for determining what should be done when the next crisis came, as it certainly would come. A little later came a resolution signed by a hundred and fifty men demanding that Neighbors and the resident agents, Ross and Leeper, resign.[38]

648 The situation was already critical enough when an army officer by an imprudent act provoked a disturbance that removed the last ray of hope for peace on the frontier until the Indians were removed. A Brazos reservation Indian named Fox, had been killed by a party of Jack county rangers in brutal fashion. This officer led a party of reservation Indians in search of Fox's slayers and caused great consternation by escorting them into the town of Jacksboro one night. This incident gave the radical party an excellent torch and they now set the whole frontier aflame with excitement.[39] The citizens at once organized themselves into "ranger companies" and surrounded both reservations, threatening the Indians and their agents day and night and preventing the savages from gathering up
000 their stock.[40] On May 23, John R. Baylor at the head of about 250 men came onto the Brazos reservation; but the soldiers stood their ground and the citizens withdrew, not however, until they had picked a fight with some of the Indians. The Indians pursued them for some distance and considerable fighting took place.[41]
648 The settlers declared that they would raise a thousand men and take

113 37. Mix to Neighbors, March 30, 1859. Thirtieth Congress, First Session, Sen. Doc. No. 2, p. 631. Neighbors to Mix, April 11, 1859. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

113 38. "Resolutions," April 25, 1859. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

113 39. J. R. Worrall of Jacksboro, June 1, 1859, to the Editor, The Dallas Herald, June 15, 1859.

113 40. Neighbors to Mix, May 12, 1859, and Ross to Neighbors, May 12, 1859. Ms. University of Texas photostat copies.

113 41. Report of Captain J. B. Plummer, of the United States Army. Thirty-sixth Congress, First Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 2, p. 644.

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both reservations by storm. But sufficient forces were not forthcoming and the "Army of Defense," as the frontiersmen had called themselves, disbanded for a time. Their fury was allayed somewhat by the act of the governor in appointing a board of commissioners to visit the camp of the citizens and endeavor to work out a peaceful method of attaining their ends. The commission visited the frontier communities, heard the complaints of the angry citizens and in their report of findings quite naturally declared the Indians guilty of the offenses charged.[42] But Baylor and other frontier leaders kept up the agitation and, in order to prevent another gathering, G. B. Erath, one of the governor's commissioners, called out a special force of one hundred militiamen from McLellan and Bell counties in order to assure the citizens that the Indians were being watched.[43] However, from all accounts it seems that the frontiersmen did not propose to leave to others the matter of watching the Indians and during the last few weeks preceding the removal the Indians of both reservations were harassed on every hand and dared not leave their agencies to gather up their animals, many of which were out on the range. On one occasion a fight occurred near the Comanche reservation in which both the Indians and citizens suffered some injuries.

Authority for the immediate removal of the Indians was finally granted on June 11 and on July 31, the Indians from both reservations, escorted by United States soldiers started on their journey to the valley of the Washita in Indian Territory.

The census made at the time the journey was begun showed that 1112 Indians left the Brazos reservation and 384 Comanches left the upper reservation. It was estimated that the Comanches took away with them live stock worth $9,550, and that they lost, or were forced to leave behind, live stock worth in the aggregate of $14,922.50.[44] The cost of both reservations to the United States Government had ranged between $61,655.25, for 1857, and

42. Report of John Henry Brown, G. B. Erath, J. M. Steiner, J. M. Smith and Richard Coke, to Governor Runnels, Waco, June 27, 1859. Thirty-sixth Congress, Second Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 2, pp. 665-671.

43. Erath to Ross and Neighbors, June 30, 1859. Thirty-sixth Congress, First Session Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 2, p. 668.

44. Neighbors' Memorandum, no date. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

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$91,707.50, for 1856.[45] Probably about one-third of these sums were expended on the Comanches. During the last year preceding the establishment of the reservations the United States had spent $129,820 on the Texas Indians.

A sequel to the bitter controversy over the removal of the Indians was the killing of Robert S. Neighbors on the streets of Belknap by a man he scarcely knew, if, indeed he had ever seen him before or knew the man had aught against him. Neighbors had seen the Indians safely located in the Leased District in Indian Territory, had turned them over to their agent there, and was returning home to make his final report to the Indian Office. He stopped at Belknap on matters of business and was killed as he was preparing to proceed on his way to his home in San Antonio.[46]

Perhaps in their zeal to protect their wards from the wrath of the white people Neighbors and his associates were blind to the faults of the savages but their courage and devotion to duty in protecting the Indians against what they regarded as the prejudice and avarice of the white men is one of the finest examples of public service to be found in the annals of the American frontier. They were confronted with great odds with their former friends and neighbors aligned against them. At times they had to fight almost single handed, but they stood at their post and were never lacking in either physical or moral courage.

Thus ended the Texas reservation experiment. It may well be doubted that even without the hostile attitude of the white frontiersmen the Comanche reservation could have been made successful. Many of the Southern Comanches never did live on the reserve and of those who came there large numbers refused to remain. The experience of the agents was prophetic of the difficulties the Federal Government was destined to have two decades later when the plan was tried for all the nomadic tribes of the plains under circumstances far more favorable. As long as vast stretches of uninhabited prairies and herds of fat deer, antelope and buffaloes invited them

45. Clara Lena Koch, "The Federal Indian Policy In Texas," in the Quarterly, XXIX, 116.

46. Leeper to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 16, 1859. Thirty-sixth Congress, First Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 2, p. 761. On their return from Indian Territory, Neighbors and Leeper, who were traveling together, were attacked by wild Indians and Leeper was seriously wounded.

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657 the savages were loathe to accept the monotonous life of farming on
171 the reservation. The old and decrepit might gladly stay but the spirited young warriors would hie away taking with them when they could their families and friends. But the record made by these reservation Comanches proved that the nomadic tribes were amenable to progress and the equals intellectually of their more sedate kinsmen of the progressive agricultural tribes.